



IN THE DORIAN MOOD

In the Dorian mood

Victor Gustave Plarr

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In the Dorian Mood

By Oscar Wilde

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IN THE
DORIAN MOOD
BY VICTOR PLARR.



LONDON: JOHN LANE
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M D C C C X C V I

IN THE
DORMANT MOOD
BY MARY PLARR

TO M. I. P., H. M. P., AND M. C. H. P.

LONDON JOHN LANE
THE BAY BUILDING
NEW YORK 15 E. 57th St.
AT THE BAY BUILDING

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IN THE DORIAN MOOD

TO A BRETON BEGGAR

(Dol Cathedral)

In the brown shadow of the transept door,
Gray kings and granite prophets overhead,
Which are so ancient they can age no more,
A beggar begs his bread.

He too is old—so old, and worn, and still,
He seems a part of those gaunt sculptures there

To moan in prayer, moving thin carven lips,
And with faint senses striving to drink in
Some golden sound, which peradventure slips
From the altar's heart within.

What is thy prayer? Is it a plaintive praise,
An intercession, or an anguished plaint,
Remorse, O sinner, for wild vanished days,
Or ecstasy, O saint?

And through long hours when thou art wont to
sit

In moveless silence, what inspires thy thought?
Is thine an utter drowsing? Or shall wit
Still travail, memory-fraught?

Hear'st thou old battles? Wast thou one of those
Whose angry fire-locks made the hillsides ring
When, clad in skins and rags, the Chouans rose
To die for Church and King?

Or dost thou view in weird and sad array

The long-dead Cymry—they of whom men tell
That 'always to the war they marched away,'
And that 'they always fell'?

So touching are thine eyes which cannot see,
So great a resignation haunts thy face,
I often think that I behold in thee
The symbol of thy race,

Not as it was when bards Armorican
Sang the high pageant of their Age of Gold,
But as it is, a long-tressed sombre man,
Exceeding poor and old,

With somewhat in his eyes for some to read,
Albeit dimmed with years and scarcely felt,—
The mystery of an antique deathless Creed,
The glamour of the Celt!

WHEN THE LAMP IS QUENCHED

YOUR casement bright athwart the night

Gleams steadfastly—a golden square !

And I'm thrilled through for love of you

With hope that laughs away despair !

Lo, the lamp's out ! Dark night and doubt

Rush in where erst was solace sweet ;

And suddenly it seems to me

Some heart—some life—has ceased to beat !

TWILIGHT-PIECE

THE golden river-reach afar

Kisses the golden skies of even,

And there's the first faint lover's star

Alight along the walls of heaven.

The river murmurs to the boughs,

The boughs make music each to each,

And still an amorous west wind soughs

And loiters down the lonesome reach.

And here on the slim arch that spans

The rippling stream, in dark outline,

A picture better than all art,
Since none could catch that sunset stain,
Or set in the soft twilight's heart
This small strange touch of human pain !

MEJNUN AND LAILI

(After the Persic)

DRUGGED at the breast of Anguish, nursed

In Sorrow's old unnatural arms,

Daily the swart Mejnún rehearsed

Young Laili's lustrous charms.

For him his desert grew to be

Love's golden house where evermore

Madness was janitor, and he

The threshold of love's door !

The telling of his griefs oppressed

The Arabians : 'mong their youth there was

A tumult and as men possessed

Their lettered councils met : the fame
Of all thou sufferedst, saidst, and didst
For love's dear sake, Mejnún, became
A desert in their midst !

At length their Sultan spake—he too
Had plucked, whiles in love's land he paced,
Many a flower of sable hue
And fruit of haunting taste ;—

' Slave, make thy head like to thy feet
In running unto Najd ! Bestir !
Be as a violent wind and fleet,
And hither fetch me Her

Whose eyes such miseries have wrought !'
The stripling coursed away amain,
And in a twinkling homeward brought
That Empress in Love's reign.

Unto another slave he bent :.

‘Now go thou also forth and bring
Love’s burning lamp, Love’s ornament,
Love’s heart-consuméd King !’

The boy sped and returned : he had
Strange company when back he pressed :
The wounds of separation clad
Mejnún as with a vest :

His cloak was his wild hair ; ’twas spann’d
By a sharp comb of Arab thorn :
His robe was rustling desert sand :
To flint his feet were worn.

‘Look up !’ the Sultan cried, ‘O thou,
Who hast in Sorrow’s gulf been lost !
Tell me ! shall I exalt thee now
At this young beauty’s cost ?

Become a courtier, wouldst thou not

Bask on her cheek, thy wanderings done ?

‘Nay,’ cried that other, ‘’twere to blot

With atomies the sun !

‘King of high hearts, it were unjust

Thus rashly to forego our fates !

Enough if with one grain of dust

I crown me at thy gates !’

—Madness austere throned above

The desolate hollows of his eyes—

‘Me the sharp pain,’ he cried, ‘of love

For Laili doth suffice !

‘Nor do I pray that from her spheres

One ray should light this mean worn man.’

He spake, he veiled his eyes with tears,

And toward the desert ran.

‘ EOTHEN ’

ALTHOUGH I have not seen thee face to face,
Nor haply shall, strange world of all my dreams,
Yet, when I read this book, it ever seems
As though I knew thee and had leave to pace
Through fancy's faith, born of the writer's grace,
Toward the city of roses and wide streams
Beneath the purple mountain crag that gleams
'Gainst the red sunset in a desert place,
Till through an eastward gate I pass into
A world of women veiled and silent men,
A white and ghostly world, stiller than thought,
Where never voice or music sounds save when
Some plague-stained bier is hurried out of view.

EPITAPHIUM CITHARISTRIÆ

STAND not uttering sedately

Trite oblivious praise above her !

Rather say you saw her lately

Lightly kissing her last lover

Whisper not, ' There is a reason

Why we bring her no white blossom : '

Since the snowy bloom's in season

Strow it on her sleeping bosom :

Oh, for it would be a pity

To o'erpraise her or to flout her :

She was wild, and sweet, and witty—

A STORY OF THE EVIL EYE

THERE came unto an Austrian town,

In the good days of *Reich* and *Ritter*,

A slim small maid with blood-red gown,

And a bowed graybeard with a zitter.

Still hand in hand the travellers went,

Till in the *Platz* that fronts the steeple

He tuned and touched his instrument,

She danced before the market people.

Oh, 'tis a pleasant seemly noise !

Ah, she's so fair who treads the measure !

About her coif a merry mint

Of little golden byzants dances,

Which sing and ring with gleam and glint

Each time she curtseys or advances.

And round her pale sweet face her hair

Lifts and flows out with billowy motion

As strands of the gold seaweed, where

The sun shines into th' emerald ocean.

There's that within her eyes you meet

In wild wood things—they're soft and tragic

But 'tis the witchery in her feet

Which out-enchants all other magic!

They come and go, they pass and pause,

Like swallows' wings or flames a-burning,

Till half the folk cry out because

Their heads are well-nigh turning.

And half the folk laugh low, and he
Who erewhile struck, now clasps his brother.
The scold grows good, and cheerfully
The fretting child obeys its mother.

Old scores are paid ; grim men forego
The cruel quests for which they panted.
' Children, the while she dances so,
Do you not guess yourselves enchanted ? '

One spake—a dark Dominican.
Men started as the sharp words stung them ;—
And lo, an old outlandish man,
A dark-eyed Turkish witch among them !

Then someone cast a stone ;—the deed
Was his who spake—we let him claim it :
Yet were there none to intercede
For wizard worshippers of Mamet !

And soon arose a dreadful shout,—

'Tis th' Evil Eye !' and stones came flying.

That burgher throng became a rout,

And after—someone lay a-dying.

.

So—lift her head upon his knee.

At sight of this is wrath not minished ?

'Twill not last long : the tragedy

In those strange eyes is nearly finished.

They grow exceeding dim. 'Tis good

The child hath such brave rags to cover

With kindred hue the dye of blood

Now that the dance and song are over !

Once more she stirred, and strove to fold

His frail worn hand with faint endeavour :

Then o'er the scarlet and the gold

Death drew his viewless veil for ever.

TO A GREEK GEM

Was it the signet of an Antonine—
This middle-finger ring whose bezel glows
With the most lovely of intaglios
Ere wrought by craftsman in an age divine?
Or was it borne by grim Tiberius' line
At lustful festals and fierce wild-beast shows?
Sealed it wise edicts, or when Lucan chose
His artful liberal death was it the sign?

I cannot tell, nor can this lucent toy!
I only know that these small graven forms,
This cymbal-playing maenad and this boy,
In their delightful beauty shall live on,
Crannied 'mong crashing rocks, when Time's last
storms

AD CINERARIUM

Who in this small urn reposes,
Celt or Roman, man or woman,
Steel of steel, or rose of roses ?

Whose the dust set rustling slightly,
In its hiding-place abiding,
When this urn is lifted lightly ?

Sure some mourner deemed immortal
What thou holdest and enfoldest,
Little house without a portal !

When the artificers had slowly
Formed thee, turned thee, sealed thee, burned

And so bade them grave no token,
Generation, age, or nation,
On thy round side still unbroken ;—

Let them score no cypress verses,
Funeral glories, prayers, or stories,
Mourner's tears, or mourner's curses,

Round thy brown rim time hath polished,—
Left thee dumbly cold and comely
As some shrine of gods abolished.

Ah, 'twas well ! It scarcely matters

What is sleeping in the keeping

Steel of steel, or rose of roses,
Man or woman, Celt or Roman,
If but soundly he reposes !

THE STATUARY

'MONG purple deeps and foam-engirdled shallows,
In the old Aegean, on an island hill,
I know not if some dim tradition hallows
The site of an vanished city still,
Where, long ago, there lived, and toiled, and
perished
That nameless master of the Pheidian stone,
Whose handywork some secret god has cherished
Till now his fame to the four winds is blown.
Oh, hard the path and bitter of attaining
Which leads to such a long-belated fame ;

Surely he was a dreamer 'mong his brothers,
A painful outcast from his race and time,
Whose life, alas, you can re-shape from others
As greatly wretched in each age and clime.

Ah, how he toiled ! No music at his portal,
No passing laughter or clear bridal song,
Could charm him from his communing immortal
The lustrous fictions of his brain among.

The little children singing through the city
Could win no word, no greeting from his
mouth :

He was unmoved by irony or pity,
Or the blithe heart's-ease of that ancient South.

For, on a day, pacing in forest hoary,
Far from the joys and cavillings of Man,
He had been blinded by an untold glory,
He had been maddened by the strains of Pan,

And a great throng had passed him as he
wondered,

Ev'n of the gods in their transcendent grace :
The bolts within bright Phœbus' quiver
thundered,

And loosened raiment swept athwart his face,

One moment : for the high gods in derision
Filled him with torturing phrenzy, and his soul
Bade him, from that day forth, record his vision
In some divine and never-dying whole.

.

The sun-shafts smote athwart his vine-clad case-
ment ;

The moon looked on him through the breath-
ing night ;

But he toiled on, unheeding, in debasement,
In ecstasy, in anguish, in delight.

Suns, moons, and stars, and seasons passed un-
numbered

Over his toil, nor shaped the toiler's lot.

His spirit woke and watched : when others
slumbered

His art wrought on alone and slumbered not.

Youth passed, age came, and his rapt face grew
haggard,

And hunger in his hushed house watched with
him.

'We die,' he said at last, 'and I, a laggard,

Droop in the strife for fainting heart and limb.'

'Thou must be strong, O heart, in this en-
deavour !

One more surpassing struggle overpast,

One day, one night, then, O mine heart, for ever

Our toil shall live, and we have rest at last !

The tender moonlight streaming through the
casement

Shines on a statue, lovely past our thought :
A mortal craftsman stands in mute amazement
'Fore the strange splendour his frail hands
have wrought.

There enter some, when the earliest light is
creeping

Toward the goddess o'er the dusty floor,
To blame, as is their wont, but he is sleeping :
He recks not of your guidance any more !

So in that city lived, and toiled, and perished,
That nameless master of the Pheidian stone,
Whose handywork some secret god has cherished
Till now his fame to the four winds is blown.

IN OLD HASTINGS

AN hour ere dawn, when clustered stars are wan,
And such a mighty silence covers all
The world of sleep, which sleep still holds in thrall,
And such a shadow of night is yet upon
This old sea-township, whence all light hath gone,
Save where the roadway lamps, symmetrical,
Glint on red roof and dimly-bastioned wall,—
In the deep valley, a long hour ere dawn,

Only yon gleaming hill above the town,
And yon gray sea, whose dying lift and lapse
Along the beach murmur unceasingly,—
Only those twain would seem awake. Perhaps
They commune, and the mystery of the down

A SECRET OF THE SEA

Down at the bottom of the sea

The huge old galleon lies asleep ;

Red seaweeds cloak her heavily,

Green seaweeds round her droop and sweep.

Scarce any light descends to show

Her decks made black with ancient blood,

Or the few bones that dimly glow

Where her stout captain last withstood

The drunken shock of his wild crew

Who welcomed freedom in his fall

With laughter, cursing, tears, and woe

'Tis years since the faint noontide beam,
That filters to the chart-room floor,
Last rested where, as in a dream,
The drowned chief mutineer would pore

With orbits void and bony hands
Upon the chart which, day by day,
Into new shapes of seas and lands
The exploring sea-worms fret and fray ;—

Years since that semblance of a man,
That relic of unknown despair,
That symbol of past crime, began
Obscurely to be no more there !

For centuries now the ship hath lain
As drown'd forgotten ships do lie,
Unknown, alone, save for some train
Of shy small fishes starting by,

And so she still must lie until

A dying sun is burning red,

And earthquakes all earth's caverns thrill,

And the deep sea give up its dead !

THE SAILOR'S RETURN

I THINK I see her as she went

One summer eve adown the meadow ;
Slant sunshine seemed her element,
And tender, lengthening shadow.

For oh ! her eyes were soft and fair
As is the westering sun in heaven,
And the dear shadow of her hair
Was like the depth of even.

I think I see her wending by,
Her milking-pail upon her shoulder :
Her frank lips smile delightfully

'Tis good-night here, and there good-e'en —

To all a courteous country greeting :

A blither lass was never seen

At village merry-meeting.

And now the pail is set adown;

She stops to tie her hat more neatly,

And pluck a burr from off her gown

With fingers moving featly.

And on one knee she kneels to cull

Some many-petalled meadow vagrant.

No wonder girls grow beautiful

Amid a world so fragrant !

And by the gateway in the shade,

With little sighs she cannot smother,

She plucks—a poor unworldly maid—

The petals one from t'other.

‘He loves me ! No, he loves me not !’

She pressed the flower against her bosom. . .

Alas, the blue forget-me-not

Is now her only blossom.

And I, who never knew she cared,

And never found the heart for wooing,

Am standing, bowed and hoary-haired,

Alone in mine undoing, .

Beside the green and swelling mound

Where others laid earth’s sweetest daughter,

When I was far on foreign ground,

Or on the weary water.

Methinks that he were wise who might

Unweave, with many painful guesses,

The tangle tense and infinite

Of man and his distresses.

I cannot : so with swimming eyes

I'll pluck a flower that grows above her,
And pray to meet in Paradise,
Because so well I love her.

THE VEIL OF ISIS

To lift her veil, whose broideries
Are hornéd moons and lotuses,
None dare, though priest and thurifer
Charm her with frankincense and myrrh,
And long-drawn mystic harmonies.
Of all mankind's divinities
None secreter than this of his !
Behold, 'tis but to anger her
 To lift her veil.

Natheless, in each man's time there is
A lifting of her veil : each *dies*.
To die, when all the hate and stir
Are o'er, to be a slumberer,
To dream perchance,—Oh, is not this

GOOD-NIGHT

You linger when you say good-night :
The parting touch a pang conveys.
'Tis,—' Shall we meet at morning light,
Or only on the Day of Days ? '

IN A NORMAN CHURCH

As over incense-laden air

Stole winter twilight, soft and dim,

The folk arose from their last prayer—

When hark, an ancient hymn !

Round yon great pillar, circlewise,

The singers stand up, two and two—

Small lint-haired girls from whose young eyes

The gray sea looks at you.

Now heavenward the pure music wins

With cadence soft and silvery beat :

In flutes and subtile violins

It is a chant with plaintive ring,
And rhymes and refrains old and quaint :
' Oh Monseigneur Saint Jacques,' they sing,
And ' Oh Assisi's Saint.'

Through deepening dusk one just can see
The little white-capped heads that move
In time to lines turned rhythmically
And starred with names of love.

Bred in no gentle silken ease,
Trained to expect no splendid fate,
They are but pleasant children these,
Of very mean estate.

Nay, is that true ? To-night perhaps
Unworldlier eyes had well discerned
Among those little gleaming caps
An aureole that burned.

For once 'twas thought the Gates of Pearl
Best opened to the poor that trod
The path of the meek peasant girl
Who bore the Son of God.

SHADOWS

A SONG of shadows : never glory was

But it had some soft shadow that would lie
On wall, on quiet water, on smooth grass,
Or in the vistas of the phantasy:

The shadow of the house upon the lawn,
Upon the house the shadow of the tree,
And through the moon-steeped hours unto the
dawn

The shadow of thy beauty over me.

DEATH AND THE PLAYER

I WATCHED the players playing on their stage ;

An old delightful comedy was theirs,

The very picture of a gallant age,

Full of majestic airs.

Wit, virtuoso, captain, stately lord,

Each played his part with smooth Augustan
grace ;

And, gray and curl'd, th' Olympian perruques
soared

O'er each fine oval face.

Anon, young Celia, poised on red high heels,

Advanced with Chloe, the discreet soubrette :

Her laughter rings abroad in silver peals :

One was a whiskered son of awful Mars ;
And one, the favourite, a thing of spleen,
Whose pasquil jests, a stream of falling stars,
Illumined all the scene.

They trod a minuet, and evermore,
Betwixt the curtseying lady and her thrall,
A masked and shrouded dancer kept the floor,
Unnoted by them all.

Alas, poor player, that was Death's Dance in-
deed !

The curtain fell ; the masker's fleshless hand
Compelled thee to his chariot, which at speed
Rolled home to his own land.

And now with cheeks and eyelids that confess
Grim stains of the last midnight's gay disguise,
The ingenious haggard actors swiftly press
Where their dead brother lies.

How strange a graveside—oh, how strange a
scene !

The player's double life in such eclipse !
What a morality would this have been
On those once mocking lips !

But they are dumb, and there's scarce time for
tears.

Back to the town ! They're clamouring for
our plays.

'Tis good that arch-comedian Death appears
But once in many days !

TO A DEAD STUDENT

I KNEW not your thoughts, nor regarded your
books,

But now you are dead

There is not a thought of your thinking, a book
of your reading,

That my heart hath not known and read !

Alas, for the silenced lips and the dear closed
eyes !

They answer me not

Who am seeking for clues and for glosses, tradi-

CHARLOTTE CORDAY

THE Furies born of night and tumult mar
France, and her strong impassioned children are
Broken, and blind, and bleeding through despair :
Yet lo ! amid the darkness wild, a Star.

The hair of it is as a woman's hair ;
The light of it is bright and passing fair :
Lo ! in the dark the swift flash of a sword :
Hark ! a sweet voice that cries aloud : ' I dare !

' I dare to break your idol o'er-adored,
O Poor of France ; I dare to smite your lord.
I slaying him, have set your millions free !

‘He being dead to whom you bowed the knee,
Your eyesight shall be purgéd ; you shall see
To walk when I, the murderess, am sped :
Yes, you shall live through loss of him and me.’

.

Hail ! riding by in robe of flamelike red !
Hail ! lift on high thy young dishevelled head.
To men’s derision pay not any heed,
But take thou precedence amid the dead.

To them who loved thee Death shall be for meed ;
They too shall follow where thy bright steps
lead.

From convent unto scaffold pass, beloved,
And know this well that Time shall praise thy
Deed.

AT CITOYENNE TUSSAUD'S

THE place is full of whispers—' Mark you, sirs,
This one is he who struck our moralists mute
Before the crime which proved him wholly brute !
Mark well his face ! ' The gaping sight-seers
Nudge one another, and no tongue but stirs
In awe-struck comment on hat, coat, and boot,
Mean smirking smile, base air of smug repute,
Worn by some prince of viler murderers !

Nay, I like most these lank-tressed doctrinaires
Who cluster round their powerless guillotine;
Aquiline, delicate, dark, their thin cheeks mired
By their own blood—these Carriers and Héberts :

The black and so on...

TO PASSIVE OBEDIENCE

I

(From 'Les Châtiments')

O sons of the Year Two! Wars waking epic
chords!

Against the banded kings together drawing
swords,

In Europe's furthest bounds,

Against all earthly Tyres and Sodoms far and
wide,

Against the northern Czar who after men doth

Against great Europe's self with all her lords
of war,

With all her men-at-arms that throng her steps
afar,

With all her knights of thews,
A crested hydra-shape that wrathfully doth rear,
Singing they marched and marched, with souls
devoid of fear,

With feet devoid of shoes !

At day-dawn, and sundown, 'neath southern or
arctic sky,

With their old muskets clanking rustily shoulder-
high,

O'er torrent and o'er fell,

Without repose or sleep, in rags and driv'n to fast,
They marched on, proud and glad, to such a
trumpet-blast

As blow the fiends of Hell !

Liberty, the sublime, was steeping each man's
thought;

Navies were ta'en by storm, frontiers were made
as nought,

Beneath their tread divine !

O France, 'twas every day wrought marvels past
compare,—

Shocks, charges, battles fought, and on th' Adige
Joubert,

And Marceau on the Rhine !

They drove the vanguard in, the centre they
dispersed ;

In rain, in snow, in floods, above their waists
immersed,

Onward they pressed for aye !

And one besought for peace, another flung gates
wide,

Oh, but how great you were in battles' midmost
places,

Soldiers ! With lightning eyes and wild dis-
ordered faces

In the fight's whirlpool blind,
They glowed and shone, erect, with lifted fronts,
afire ;

And even as desert lions the tempest's blast
respire

When blows the great North wind,
So were they rapt away by their wild epic life !
Drunken, they still drank in sounds of heroic
strife—

Steel clashed on iron bare

The Revolution cried :—‘ You volunteered for
me !

So therefore die to set your brother peoples free ! ’

Gladly they did assent ;—

‘ Go forth, my soldiers gray, my generals virgin-
faced ! ’

And men beheld them march upon a world
amazed,—

Barefoot, magnificent !

They knew not sorrow’s pangs nor yet the pangs
of dread.

They would, I doubt it not, have stormed the
clouds o’erhead

'Mid their Olympian race, these scorers of their
doom

To rear of them had seen the great Republic
loom

With finger toward the skies.

MAY 22, 1885

SPED is our Titan? Nay, defer

The thought of death for such a man !

I know he plays at grandfather

As in the old days with *Georges* and *Jeanne* :

I know the bowed and glorious head

To-day is silvern in the sun :

Some witty word is being said,

Some trancing tale is being spun.

Mark the young faces round his chair,

Hark, eager voices echoing !

Ah me, defer it as we may,
Defer Death's terror as we will,
Our Victor cannot win to-day—
Death is your only conqueror still.

And now tired eyelids droop in sleep,
' And the familiar days are sped,
We weep not our old friend ; we weep
In a great darkness the great dead.

And we forget the children's ways,
The laughing boast, the daily tryst,
For he doth pass through heaven's full blaze
With Alighieri unto Christ.

A NIGHT OF TERROR

1870

THEY woke me up, for my small eyes were tight
Shut in night's first sweet sleep. 'We waken
you,'

They whispered, 'to behold the strangest sight :
The seeing of such sights is given to few !'

Far off upon the horizon's verge, the night,
Which round our mountain hung so still and
blue,

Was diapered with little shoots of light
That rose, and curved, and burst, as rockets do.
I stirred in my small bed, and 'gan to plain
Because they waked me. Then I heard them

‘ O God, the city will not live till day ! ’

And lo, mine eyes were changed and ’gan to
feast

Not as in dreams or games on that bright rain,

And, on the Night of Terror, childhood ceased !

IN EXCELSIS

1889

OH how delectable it is to be
Over against the sea
When through deep gloaming, the drench'd
dying gloaming,
In long long line on line the waves go foaming
Strandward, aye voicing, 'Yea, eternally !'

To watch where wave on wave of the rock'd flood
Falls with a sibilant thud—
Falls, and flows back, 'mid huge reverberations
O'er the torn beach. 'mid foam for exhalations.

To hear, while equinoctial storms subside,
The vast untiring tide
Singing old Nature's mystic *In Excelsis*,
Its strange self-centred psalm ! Surely nought
else is
More sweet, more dread, more to be magnified.

Nay, there is one thing more delectable
Than the sea's echoing swell !
To hear confused sound of many people
At feast in shadow of each village steeple
This day when years ago the Bastille fell ;
To hear, where flags flap red, and blue, and
white,
The cannon's hoarse delight,
The bells, the clarions, the huge mystic throbbing
Of marching feet, the laughter, the hush'd sob-
bing
Of such as whisper to themselves : ' The night

Slips from thy face, O France, and thou art fair
Under thy laurelled hair

After the traffickings of kings and traitors,
After the shifts of priests and progress-haters,
After much blood and infinite despair !'

To hear this is to hear beyond defeat,
Republican, complete,
France chaunting myriad-voiced her *In Excelsis*,
Her ultimate choric song, than which nought
else is

More to be magnified, more dread, more sweet.

CHE SARA SARA !

PREACH wisdom unto him who understands !

When there's such lovely longing in thine
eyes,

And such a pulse in thy small clinging hands,

What is the good of being great or wise ?

What is the good of beating up the dust

On the world's highway, vexed with drouthy
heat ?

Oh, I grow fatalist—what must be must,

Seeing that thou, belovéd, art so sweet !

IN A GARRET

In deep twilight

The rain taps upon the skylight,

Beating, beating, like a deathless pulse of pain :

From the writing

His tired hands are aye inditing

He looks upward to the window dulled with rain,

And he muses

On the fame that still refuses

To attend him as he plies life's hungry trade,

On the rapture

Of the dreams he cannot capture,

Is he dreaming ?

No, 'tis but a slumber seeming,

But the shadow of a dream that vanisheth;

For the drifting

Misty veil of sleep uplifting

Hath but now disclosed the shadowy flood of
death.

ECCLESIASTES CHAPTER XII

HE hath a few more days to live, and we
Go to the festal, dight with robes and flowers,
And all is goodly in this world of ours,
And 'All is Vanity,' saith he.

He hath outlived the heaviest share of days :
His gray locks flutter in the wind : his lips
Tremble and moan as in his steps he slips,
And all is Vanity always.

For him the sun, and moon, and stars are dark :
After the rain the clouds return for him.
The keepers of his soul's house quake in limb,
The strong men bow themselves adown, and

The grinders cease through being few, and those
That from the windows of the spirit gaze
Are darkened, and below them, in the ways,
What time the grinding fails the portals close.

And this old man at cock-crow riseth up
To live a little o'er the long ago.
For him sweet Musick's daughters are brought
low :

He careth not at all for dance or cup,

But feareth that which loometh out on high,
For in his faltering way is many a fear ;
The shrilling grasshopper he scarce can bear,
And all his old desires grow near to die,

Because to-day man seeketh his long home,
And mourners go about the vacant streets :
Oh, little day of life ; oh, bitter sweets !
Whence have I come, and what shall I become ?

Or ever the silver cord be loosen'd, or
The golden bowl be broken on the wall,
Or the full pitcher at the fountain fall,
Or ever the cistern-wheel can turn no more,

Then shall the dust return unto the earth
Even whence it came—it trod, and shall be
trod,—

And the thin spirit shall go back to God
Of Whom we know not, and who gave it birth.

BEFORE THE TIME OF MOWING

DEEP in long seedling grass the meadows lie,

Bedappled by the shadows of the trees :

Now and again the bloom-enamoured breeze

Comes for one little moment rustling by :

The great soft moon with drench of golden dye

Enchants the world, till all the glimmering leas

Give forth strange warmth. Were all one's

hours like these,

It were not hard, love, for us twain to die !

For grief is dead now. Listen, only list

To yon bird's voice : o'er bloomy orchard

Where bridal trees rise islanded in mist,

Floats out the singing of the nightingale !

‘ Oh, love, love, love, love lost, love suddenly
found ’—

Such is her descant. Nay, but thou art pale !

CONFESSION

BECAUSE she spoke no word, but parted wide
Her tantalising lips, and '*ces yeux verts*,'
Which the romantic poet Baudelaire
Would have held half divine, methought I spied
A fault in her ; methought she gently tried
To scout my love with smiling sedulous care,
For that her fancy had gone elsewhere,
And I had grown a shadow at her side.

So long I begged her in my desperate fear
For one kind word, one sigh, one tremulous

‘ An you be shy, sweet, whisper in mine ear ! ’

I said in anguish. Then quite suddenly

She spake out loud :—‘ I have given my love

to thee :

Nothing shall change it till the change of

Death ! ’

A COROT IN NATURE

THE sunset sky burns deep and red beyond
The massy oakwoods as they fade into
That opaque green which is night's very hue,
So dark, so full of quiet. Every frond
And mighty verdure-vested branch hath donned
Dim raiment of great shadow. 'Tis a view,
Quick with some sovran charm, to be by you
Remembered, and perpetually re-conned.
The perfect silence, the vast lonesomeness,
The cool, the glow, the breath of evening,
Scarce tinged with a faint scent of blossomed

Scarce thrilled with a vague sense of some-
thing sad,

Are they not sweet, and shall you not confess

That such dear pathos maketh almost glad ?

THE GODDESS OF THE ISLANDERS

In the midmost page, the bookworm's pasturage,
Of some folio by a curious traveller writ,
Hast thou read the story of the Mystic Island
And such as dwelt in it?

All the moons are brighter, so saith the travelled
writer,
In that island than the sunlight of our Junes :
'Tis a land of midnight forests, popped meadows,
And seaward-looming dunes.

And such as do possess it, and as gardeners
dress it,

Are a sorrowful old tribe of little ease,—

Men with wistful faces, women drooping darkly

Endless wars oppress them, plagues and flames
distress them :

Their best works are fruitless or surcharged with
woe,

But they only whisper, 'It is the Great Goddess,
The Goddess wills it so !'

'Oh, but thou art glorious, wonderful, victorious,
Dear transcendent Queen to whom we bow !
Set the outlandish nations babbling of their
godheads—

These art not thou, not thou !

'Subtile Arab trader, and Portingale invader,
With his firelocks and his god in anguish slain,
And the shy ascetic seeking his Nirvana,
These surely preach in vain.

'For thou art eternal, beyond dispute, infernal,
A fair woman with no heart in her great eyes,

‘Through thy mystic glass thou seeëst all things
pass,

As in some long pageant, changing hour by hour,
And amid their glory, squalor, laughter, sorrow,
Thy face shines a pure flower !’

As some woman will lean o’er her window-sill,
Watching every humour of a moving street,
So she views her mirror. ‘Ah, but art thou
helpless

In old and long defeat ?

‘Canst thou not befriend, refashion, or amend ?
Art thou only watching some tremendous game

Or art crazed through being so lonely and all-
seeing,

Crazed through brooding on this world thy
hands have made ? ’

Deaf she is and voiceless ! She would never tell
me,

Though evermore I prayed.

Silent still she muses, or braids her hair, or
chooses

Gems from out their caskets for her brows
sublime,

And behold, each stone is sentient, and half
human,

A passion or a crime !

Yet the glories old of diamonds and gold

Scarcely do arrest her soft and dreamful gaze :

’Tis the complex agate and the cloudy moonstone

Which charm her through whole days,—

These and the verdure sterile of emerald, jade,
and beryl,

And the topaz' mystic laughter, and the rose

Of the fleshlike onyx, and the fiery sardius,

And the opal's flame-fraught snows.

Στερρὰ γὰρ ἀνάγκη

HECUBA, 1295.

I GAZE into her loved eyes, and behold

A terror there—,

Death's vague monition and the pain untold

Of newly-learnt despair.

Late sunglow over the oak-woods by the sea,

A wind that hovers,

Dog-roses breathing,—these, methinks, must be

A spell o'er happier lovers.

For us a pang is in the wind ; the waves

And woods' perfumes

Such love as ours is but to lose hearts'-ease

Beyond return :

How ends that play of sweet Euripides ?

Thus surely :—' Fate is stern ! '

AN ADAPTATION OF AN EPISODE
IN VIRGIL

‘Tris litore cervos
Prospicit errantis; hos tota armenta sequuntur
A tergo; et longum per vallis pascitur agmen.’

ÆNEID I, 184.

A SCALD, whose song was ever of the Norns,
Stood once on steeply seaward-facing land,
When lo ! arboreal horns,
And far, far down, stags wandering on the sand,
And after these, up a long inland vale,
Coming from out of the old inland unknown,
Great deer-droves looming pale
And vague, for overhead thick mist is blown,

Till, by the gods' hands driven,
Silently forth from view go stags and deer.
Then sang that lonely scald to the loud wind
With tongue made heavy by a weight of
weeping—
'Lo! it is human kind,
In the night born, and through the dim dawn
sweeping
From the gods' gaze, silent and sudden hordes,
By mist-wrapt ways of shifting sand, and led
By splendour-brained lords
To the forgetting and forgotten Dead.'

ON A READING OF MATTHEW
ARNOLD

ARNOLD is dead, and everyone forgets
His gracious doctrine, his hellenic creed,
His faith in light and sweetness. 'Tis indeed
So easy to repudiate our debts
Of heart and brain ! When what one most regrets
Is stint of love, and ease, and wealth, who need
Go wail for culture ? 'Tis a colourless weed
Which no one in his table nosegay sets.

Yet, great Oxonian, it were meet and fit
Could we but halt upon our daily stage
Of petty duty, dull mechanic task,
To meditate thy theme and hear thee ask,
'Is conduct all ? Are grace, and light, and wit.

THE NIGHT-JAR *

ON the river, in the shallows, on the shore,
Are the darkness and the silence of the tomb ;
O'er the woods the sunset dyed an hour before
Utter gloom.

Only here betwixt the ramparts of tall trees,
In mid-stream, the pallid waters gleam afar,
Scarce a ripple on their surface, scarce a breeze,
Scarce a star.

Where the shadow of the ruined water-mill
Hides the mill-pool and its anchored lily fleet,
And the warm air seems to slumber over-still,

Hark the Night-jar! In the meadows by the
stream

Shrills the bird's unearthly note : I like it well,
For it lulls you as the mystery of a dream,
Or a spell.

All the nightingales along the bowery reach
Plain together when the midnight moon is
bright :

This bird only knows the secret speech
Of dark night.

Turn the boat now. Row away, friends. Let
us hence,

Lest the glamour of the night's o'er-trancing
breath,

Plunge us one and all into that dream intense
Which is Death.

THE VIOLIN-PLAYER

You who love music and comprehend

All the pomps and triumphs of sound,

Deign you to follow me, critical friend,

Into my span of enchanted ground ?

An infinite sky where the sun has set,

A chamber of shadow and after-glow,

Against the window *en silhouette*

A model for Fra Angelico,

A slim girl-form, a delicate pose,

A downcast head, a glory of hair,—

Often I think that such were those

A soft cheek pressed to a violin,
And two grave eyes that haply keep
Watch for the soul of the music in
The notes that follow the white arm's sweep,
—Such is my vision ! Oh, unto me
The child and her tune are the hunger of
heart,
The vague sweet sorrow, the mystery,
Which are the beginning and end of Art.

DE MORTUIS NIL NISI BONUM

'THWART his brow and round his eyes

Mark the weary lines and deep !

Nay, they baffle our surmise,

And are secrets Death must keep ?

When a man is dead you deem

That the child's look comes apace :—

Ancient hope, poetic dream,

Light of first love haunt the face !

Or at most his look but is

Sum of all the unsensuous side

Of his life, his love, his hope, his

Nay, at last you are not loth
To admit that more is there—
Baffled hope, and cheated troth,
Disappointment and despair !

Yet with me you have not seen
How this dead man's message mute,
Proves but th' old blood-bond between
Man and some ancestral brute !

You are shocked because I read
Old debauch and bygone hate
In this mask as in a screed
Signed by the trite mark of Fate.

Nay, you shudder when I ask,—
Is it that the muscles change
Their old tension through the mask,
Leaving it new-drawn and strange,

Or is't some dark dominant sin

Makes the whole face loom so great,

So ascetical, so thin,

And so all inviolate?

TO ONE WHO FAILED

BECAUSE you failed, because you failed,
Failed without ceasing, O my friend,
And the strong spat on you and railed,
I love you, love you without end.

The weak ways and the wandering thought
Are grown divine because you fell :
Friend, you have won a rest unsought,
By Milton's side ! you have conquered Hell,
Ay, Hell of modern seasons fled
With the creeds' refuse and the arts',
Where unideal women wed
To brute men, dowered with dying hearts.

BURLESQUE

THE footlights glint, the house is set,
Fair ladies rustle fans and laces ;
Flutings proclaim a tuning clarionet,
Fiddles go through their paces.

The gloved conductor mounts his chair,
Whilst programme-hawkers sink their voices :
He raps his desk : his baton sweeps in air—
His overture rejoices.

And then, in soft and swift eclipse,
The curtain out of sight goes winging,
And, with a glow of moving limbs and lips,

‘A trite old scene,’ grim critics say :

‘A harbour—ships !’ nay, but you’re boorish
To quarrel with these skies more bright than day
These quays and houses Moorish.

Critic, I dote upon this throng

That swings, retreating and advancing,
As though this weary world were set to song,
And always, always dancing.

Look, to the front, with beck and nod,

With jibe and infinite gyration,
The mime of mimes has sprung, the groundling’s
god,
The king of this mad nation.

‘Brava !’ cries gallery, and stall,

Avers the man’s as mad as ever.
Strange now, dear critic, I laugh not at all
Although he’s monstrous clever.

'Tis drawing on—that old attack,
That mood confounding brain and senses :
You know this playhouse is my Church—alack !
I cannot make pretences.

Critic, you damn an Arabesque
In art—a ' Music Hall Tradition ' :
Well, be it so, good sir : this base burlesque
Is my sublime perdition.

For as I watch it, evermore,
Sweet pain upon my heart encroaches,
Delightful languors knock at my heart's door,
Dreams haunt in its approaches.

And when, in clouds of roseleaf rain,
The dancers storm the scenic city,
And all the panting playhouse thrills again
To hear some well-loved ditty,

I, with a difference, also thrill
In joyance, vague, divine, immortal,
As in the old legends fasting hermits will,
Who see heaven's opened portal,—

Till blind with light and gorgeous hue,
O'erborne with music wild and tender,
Crazed with the incessant joyous dance, I view
An unimagined splendour.

The orchestra's music changes—dies ;
The stage seems far away and shrunken ;
Sudden, I plunge alone 'mid fiery skies,
As one with opium drunken.

Around me, through me, everywhere,
As lightnings in dark violent weather,
Sound, Hue, and Shape, great angels past compare,
Sweep triumphing together.

And Sight, Touch, Hearing, grown intense,
Pursue them with a dancer's motions,
Till, merging in one quintessential sense,
They die in luminous oceans.

Then silence : then a shock, a jar,
A shivering, and a lamentation :
In heaven the untoward falling of a star,
At heart a desolation.

And then a voice : ' Well done, say I.

Gad, it's a quarter past eleven.

Liked you the piece, sir ? ' Can one make reply :

' They have played plays in heaven ? '

A PARTERRE OF KINGS

WITH diamonds the boxes flashed and blazed :

Bejewelled orders shone in the parterre.

It was a ceremonial night : there were

So many gems there that the *claque* amazed

Forgot to cheer, and e'en the gas was dazed,

So many costly modish splendours there

That the cowed gallery people gasped for air

The while perspiringly they gazed and praised.

The portly little *diva*, bribed with gold

Enough to make twelve Miltons roll in wealth,

Sang, somewhat out of voice, her refrain old.

Six wreaths were flung her—th' impresario's

part,—

Four Grand Dukes went behind the scenes by

stealth,

A NOCTURNE AT GREENWICH

FAR out, beyond my window, in the gloom
Nightly I see thee loom,
Thou vast black city. Oh, but night is kind,
Here where Thames' waters wind,
To the grim formless features of thy face.
They do assume such grace
In the deep darkness, starred through leagues of
night,
With long streets, fringed with light,
Or with the lanthorns of the ships that aye
Ascend the water-way,
Coasting from East and West, and North and
South,
To this Earth's harbour-mouth

The shipman's wandering cry,
Or, like a wild beast's call heard in a dream,
The siren's undulant scream
Whistles the darkling midnight through and
through,
While with her labouring screw
Some dim leviathan of ships drops down
Past storied Greenwich town,
Showing her swiftly-gliding starboard light,
Green 'gainst the wide dark night.
Past the great hospital she drops, and past
The marshes, still and vast,
Below the lines of Woolwich and the lines
Of Bostal's shadowy pines,
On to that world of Saxon brine and fen,
Old races, vanished men,
Where Thames, from heron-haunted shores set
free,
Merges in northern sea.

Here, in my chamber, 'mong my books, at peace,

I watch thee without cease,

Thou ancient stream, mysterious as the sky

Which starless glooms on high.

About me, on the volume-peopled wall,

The famed old authors all

Sleep their just sleep, and in the hearth's clear
beams

Dante's medallion gleams,

And Brutus and great Tully o'er the shelves

Commune among themselves.

This silent music of what once hath been

Suits well with that night scene :

Nay, its essential sweetness sweeter grows,

Because that river flows

Through northern midnight, big with life and
doom,

Out yonder in the gloom.

THROUGH THE WOOD

(By Dartmoor, Sept., 1893)

TO F. W. W.

ALL day long upon her throne

Reason sat,

Ruled the realm which is her own

Judged of this, disputed that :

Now the heart doth beat alone !

In the deep lane by the hedge

Trails a leaf,

And along the river's edge

Journey through the wood you must
 Though the tread
Falter in the soundless dust,
And the dark oaks overhead
Shudder in a silent gust !

Journey through the wood you shall
 When the tors
Are grown dark and tragical,
And the wit no longer soars,
And the valley lights enthrall !

Night hath just that mystic power
 Now as when,
On the moor there, hour by hour,
Those old Neolithic men
'Mong their monstrous stones did cower

While the screech-owl swept the ground,
 And the wolf

Went his swift mysterious round
On the shore of midnight's gulf
Where the dead sheep's bones are found !

In a circle of gray stone

Reason sat

All day long among her own,
Arguing this, rejecting that :
Now the heart must beat alone !

THE DEER IN GREENWICH PARK

PATHTIC in their rags, from far and near,
The children of the slums o'erswarm the grass :
Pathetic in their grace the kinglike deer
Leap up to let them pass.

Where riot scares the gloom and fevers burn
These wizened babes were pent till morning
light :
Slim shadows moving 'mong the moonlit fern
These shy deer strayed all night.

In the hot hours London's poor wastrels find
Their paradise in this brown London Park :
The lordlier brutes in the scant shade reclin'd

When some dim instinct of primeval years
Thrills on a sudden through each dappled breast,
And with untamable mysterious fears
The herd is repossessed !

Then the branch'd horns are tossed : the nostrils
fine

Respire the sleepy breath from London's heart,
And bucks, and does, and fawns, in spectral line,
Forth from their bracken start.

An antlered watchman stamps a shapely hoof—
Is that a tartaned Gael within the brake ?
Did Luath bay below the heath-clad roof—
Doth Fingal's son awake ?

Hath a harp wailed in Tara ? Did a bough
Snap in Broceliande, where Merlin keeps
His drowsy magic vigil even now
In the oak-woods' sunlit deeps ?

Was it a cry, borne from Caerluda town—

A spell the Stag of Ages understands?

Or voices of old rivers raving down

Through heathery Cymric lands?

Or—since the red stag by wild mountain streams

Is he whom such weird terrors most appal;

Since these be fallow deer, and yonder dreams

The dom'd Stuart Hospital,—

Was it the bugle, echoing as of yore

In some vast chase, enwrapt in lake-side mists?

Swept Herne the Hunter by, or score on score

Of silken Royalists?

Hunts captured Charles? Or hath Cromwellian
shot

Laid some escaping war-spent gallant low

In the far ride where last year's leaf doth rot,

And, save the deer, none go?

Who knows what stirs them? Nay, can any
guess

That which their beautiful clear eyes import
When, at high noon, about your hand they press,
Begging in timid sort,

Save haply the exile's doom, which is the same
Whether 'tis buried in the tragic eyes
Of king discrowned, or wanderer without name,
Bondman, or brute that dies?

THE HAUNTING DREAM

LAST night a melancholy dream

Pursued me down the gulphs of sleep,
Like some great bird that flits a-gleam
In a ship's wake on the lone deep.

One of those dreams it was so sweet,
And subtly sad, that when I woke,
And rose, and went into the street,
I dreamt although I moved and spoke :

I dreamt although my hands and brain
Were busy in the jarring noon ;
I dreamt till night came round again,

Oh for the joy that might have been,
Oh for the joy that shall not be,
And that which thou hast never seen,
And that which thou mayst never see !

TO ONE ASLEEP

WITH a rush and a growl at Cannon Street,
And a jest like an oath, in he leapt
'Mong the clerkings demure and discreet,
But 'ere Deptford he slept.

Slumber hangs in the eyelids of intrigue,
Sleep entraps drunken feet from beneath,
But before such an infinite fatigue
It is almost like death.

Nay, the man might be dead before our eyes.
Pale and worn, dulled and still, shrunk and
cowed,

Of a truth he will look no otherwise

What's his trade ? Does he toil among the ships,
On the rails ? in the streets ? Who can guess
From the things that long since were finger-tips,
Or the grime on his dress ?

For at best here is only one more slave
Of the toil that has used and outworn
Half our kind from the cradle to the grave
Since the day Man was born.

Painful Science proclaims him half a brute,
Old Religion maintains him God's heir :
But he knows not the matter in dispute :
An' he knew, would he care ?

There's the cant of 'the Workman's Glorious
Reign' ;
There's the cant of 'what Effort can teach' ;
There's the cant of 'the Discipline of Pain' :
Does he hear when they preach ?

'Summer burns, winter nips with snow and ice ;

It is good for a man to beget ;

Food and fire are the jewels of great price,

And to drink's to forget :

'In the morning at dawn the "hooters" cry,

And at eve about dark work is o'er;

You must work an' you do not want to die' :—

That's his creed at the core.

Though he knows not the trade of his sire,

Nor can tell whence his grandfather came;

Though his caste is a bastard which the mire

Aye begets out of shame ;

Though the grime has crept inward to his heart,

From the things that were once finger-tips;

Though the sweat from his brow shall not depart

Nor the curse from his lips ;

Shall you scoff at the tenets of his creed,
And aver he's a leper to shun,
Or confess, 'Here is Tragic Cain indeed,
Here is Man's eldest son ?'

THE END

JOHN LANE



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